# Ise Oluwa Kole Baje O (*What God created cannot be spoilt*) Emancipation Sunday 2023

## Entrance

Today we will be commemorating the ending of slavery in Canada. Throughout the history of our world, slavery has existed. While slavery meant that one human being owned another, it did not include treating the enslaved as anything but a human being. However, with the enslavement of Africans during the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the enslaved were no longer considered human beings. They were considered chattel (personal property of the enslaver) and treated as things, and their status was passed on to their children. The enslaved were used in whatever ways their owners chose. As we commemorate the abolition of slavery, we affirm that all persons are created by God and created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, with confidence we affirm that Black people, like all other human beings, were created by God in the image of God.

As we commemorate the ending of slavery this morning, we use the words from the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria to declare Ise Oluwa Kole Baje O (e-shay o-loo-wah cole baje oh), which means that what God has created cannot be spoilt or destroyed.

## Centring

Let us, on this fine August day, look at ourselves, made in the image of God. Whatever colour, shape, or size we are, let us remember the words of the Psalmist:

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. Psalm 139:14

## Musical Ministry

## Call to Worship

We are humbled by the beauty of God’s creation.  
**Ise Oluwa Kole Baje O**God’s creation fills us with awe, and we get a sense of your love.  
**Ise Oluwa Kole Baje O**God has made all people in their image.  
**Ise Oluwa Kole Baje O**We praise God, Holy Mystery, because we are beautifully and wonderfully made.  
**Ise Oluwa Kole Baje O**

## Hymn

“Praise with Joy the World’s Creator,” *Voices United* 312

## Opening Prayer

Good God, we come into your presence filled with awe and wonder.  
Although there is much that happens in the world that causes harm and hurt,  
we know that nothing can separate us from your love,  
we know that after Good Friday will come the Resurrection morning.  
So, like the enslaved Africans of old, teach us to hold on,  
teach us to hope; teach us to trust you.  
Help us to bring our sacrifice of praise to you this day,  
because you are worthy of all our praise.  
Amen

## Confession

We confess the Holy Mystery that often fails to see the reflection of your mystery in those around us. Through our words, thoughts, and actions, we fail to treat others with the dignity and love that they deserve.  
We confess that we shame others because of their bodies in our world. We have tried to console ourselves, believing we do it for their good. But we do so ignoring the emotional, spiritual, and mental harm that we are inflicting.  
We confess that often in our world, we are intolerant of others because of the way they speak. While we may have excellent reasons for our intolerance, we fail to see the damage that this can cause. We have failed to realize that we all have accents and can speak the same language in diverse ways.  
We confess that we have treated others differently because of their skin colour and ethnicity. We remember with sadness the terrible and cruel ways, the racism and microaggressions, in which the Indigenous Peoples of this land and people of African descent, Asian heritage, and Hispanic heritage have been treated.  
While slavery has ended, the legacies of slavery still live.  
You are not the God who delights in feeling bad about us. The sacrifice acceptable to you, God,, is a broken and contrite heart. We know you are the God extravagant with love, willing to forgive. On this, we trust.  
Hear us, for we pray in your name.  
Amen

## Statement of Pardon

The love of God is limitless. As we confess God forgives, let us live in that forgiveness and be channels of God’s steadfast love.  
**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn**

“Creator God You Gave Us Life,” *More Voices* 27

## Litany

Let us pause to remember the 12 million Africans kidnapped, bought, or forcibly taken to enslavement.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

Let us pause to remember that at least 2 million persons died during the voyage over the Atlantic. Their names are unknown to us, and their death can be easily ignored and forgotten. Still, they were sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, and relatives of others that would never be reunited.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

Let us remember that after the arrival of the French colonizer in New France, the Indigenous peoples were enslaved. Later, in 1689, enslaved Africans arrived in New France. They were treated brutally and unkindly.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

Let us remember that with the arrival of the British, slavery continued and the number of enslaved people increased. People from all sectors of the society were enslavers. Merchants owned the largest number, but farmers, the political elite, and church members were also enslavers.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

We remember that if the enslaved sought to gain their freedom by running away, they were hunted down and brutally treated if found.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

We remember that on August 1, 1834, all enslaved persons were freed throughout Canada because of an Act passed in the British Parliament.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

We remember that the legacies of slavery still exist in our country. Racism and acts of hate are still experienced, and felt.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

We remember that the buying and selling of human beings continues in our world and occurs here in Canada. Human trafficking for prostitution and sex work still exists.  
**Love will never be destroyed. Lord, help us to love.**

**Hymn**

“Though Ancient Walls,” VU 691

**Scripture Reading**

Acts 10:34‒43

## Sermon

## Hymn

“I Saw the Rich Ones,” MV 127

## Invitation to Offertory

What we have comes from God. Let us now, in thanksgiving, offer to the work of God from what we have received.

## Offertory Prayer

Creator, in thankfulness to you and all that you continue to do, we offer you these gifts to continue your work here in this place. Receive not only our gifts of money but also receive us, the givers. You have created us in love, and with love, you continue to be with us. Use these gifts and ourselves to proclaim the dignity of all persons and the love you have for us all. Amen.

## Prayers of the People

Holy God, you have made us all and hate no one you have made. We acknowledge that we live in a very polarized world where hate and anger are shown to many you have created. Today, we humble ourselves before you to remember those who face hatred, have vitriol spoken about them, and are treated as though they are not made in your image and likeness.  
**Help us love and respect all people, not only with our words but also with our actions and our lives.**

We remember those who experience hate because of their race and ethnicity. You are the God who created diversity, people with different skin colours and cultures. Strengthen those who face hatred and violence because of race and ethnicity. Help us to oppose racism in its various forms and wherever it is found. Help us to acknowledge where we have been complicit with racism, and through your Spirit, help us to be the change we want in the world.  
**Help us love and respect all people, not only with our words but also with our actions and our lives.**

We remember those who experience hate because of their sexual orientation. You are the God of all persons, and sexual orientation does not alter the ways that you love. Strengthen those who experience hate and violence because of their sexual orientation. Those who live with shame because they are afraid of who they love or who have been told that they are offensive to you. Help us to oppose homophobia in all its forms. Help us to acknowledge where we have been complicit with homophobia, and through your Spirit, help us to be the change we want in the world.  
**Help us love and respect all people, not only with our words but also with our actions and our lives.**

We remember those who have hate because of their gender identity. You are the God of all persons, and gender identity does not alter the ways that you love. Transgender people in our world have been brutally murdered, and those who are non-binary have been targeted for slander and hate. Help us to oppose transphobia in all its forms. Help us to acknowledge where we have been complicit with transphobia, and through your Spirit, help us to be the change we want in the world.  
**Help us love and respect all people, not only with our words but also with our actions and our lives.**

We remember those who live with disabilities and have been treated as though they do not exist. You are the God of all persons, and diverse physical and mental abilities do not alter the ways that you love. Frequently we have not made space for people living with disabilities and have taken for granted the need for accessibility for all persons to participate in life’s activities. Sometimes a concern for money has prioritized the need to include and make space. Help us to oppose ableism in all its forms. Help us to acknowledge where we have been complicit with ableism, and through your Spirit, help us to be the change we want in the world.  
**Help us love and respect all people, not only with our words but also with our actions and our lives.**

We remember those feared, suspected, and hated because of their religion. You are the God of all persons, and religion does not alter the ways that you love. People have been assaulted because they have different religious perspectives or beliefs. Help us to oppose Islamophobia and other religious intolerances. Help us to acknowledge where we have been complicit with religious discrimination and hate; through your Spirit, help us to be the change we want the world.  
**Help us love and respect all people, not only with our words but also with our actions and our lives.**

Show us how to be your agents for a new world where love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are seen in every way we relate and interact. Show us that love has space for disagreements. Still, love is not present with hate, polarized relationships, and treating persons as though they do not exist.

Help us to acknowledge where we have been complicit with hate, and through your Spirit, help us to be the change we want in the world.  
**Help us love and respect all people, not only with our words but also with our actions and our lives.**

We pray this in his name, who has taught us to love and called on us to follow his example, Jesus our Lord.

**Lord’s Prayer**

Caribbean tune preferred

## Hymn

“The Right Hand of God,” tune by Noel Dexter, text by Patrick Prescod (One Licence [#95177](https://www.onelicense.net/search?term=the+right+hand+of+God&hymnal=&hymn=&page=1&type=submit-term&addition=&downloads-only=false))

## Benediction

In the name of God who created us, we proclaim that all persons are wonderfully made.  
In the name of Jesus, our Redeemer, we proclaim that all persons have worth and are sacred.  
In the name of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, we proclaim that injustice and hate must end.  
Go now to be agents of these truths.  
Love can never be destroyed.  
What God has created is good!  
Amen and Amen.

—*Paul Douglas Walfall is a member of the Order of Ministry serving at Pilgrim United Church, Edmonton, AB.*